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Introduction

FASCISMS OF OUR TIME

IN A DIM, spacious room of a popular Warsaw pub, several dozen Polish and Italian far-right activists embrace comrades and exchange greetings. It is the evening of November 10, 2018. The Italians have come to Warsaw to express solidarity with their Polish counterparts and walk together in an annual Polish nationalist demonstration held on November 11, known as the March of Independence. The night before the march, young men (and a few women) dressed in dark T-shirts featuring their movements' logos and the slogan "Defend Europe" are gathering to drink to international cooperation. Italian male activists enthuse about the low price of beer and the huge plates of spare ribs, while a female member of the group, whom I have known for a while, talks excitedly to me about the beauty of the Old Town. Two years into my research on far-right groups, I feel more confident when engaging in discussions, enough to challenge her a little. "It would be more beautiful had the Nazis not razed the city to the ground during the war," I tell her, but she offers no comment.[1] If she did, she would likely say what most Italian activists tell Poles when discussing the Second World War and trying to ensure that historical discord does not infringe on present-day cooperation: "Mussolini was against the attack on Poland!"[2]

But history does not seem to matter today; the activists drink to a bright future. The more beer that appears on the table, the faster the language barrier seems to diminish. An Italian wants to make a toast and asks, in English, about the Polish "equivalent" of Mussolini. "Dmowski!" a Pole shouts in response and initiates a toast to the man known as the father of Polish nationalism.[3] Some Italians scream "Lewandowski!" instead; unsurprisingly, the name of a star Polish footballer (Robert Lewandowski) is better known than that of an interwar nationalist ideologue.

The next day, at the march, the mood among the activists is far less exuberant. Although the press has been reporting that the far right, tacitly supported by the current government and president, has been able to "take over" the national holiday, activists themselves see the situation somewhat differently. First organized in 2010 by several far-right associations, the march has grown from a small-scale demonstration into a massive annual gathering that attracts more politically moderate Poles as well as far-right groups from numerous European countries. This year's march has a special significance because it marks the centenary of the (reestablished) Polish Republic.[4] This fact has led to political and media debates about the "appropriation" of Independence Day by fringe groups and the obligation of state authorities to "do something about it." The initial decision by the mayor of Warsaw to ban the march for safety reasons was challenged on free-speech grounds by critics on both the Left and the Right. As a result of negotiations between the president of Poland (representing the right-wing populist party, Law and Justice, PiS), the mayor of Warsaw (representing the oppositional centrist party, Civic Platform, PO), and the court that had to decide the march's legal status, two marches—an official, state-sponsored march along with the nationalist one—are supposed to share the same route.[5] This decision has the nationalist activists complaining that their march, a grassroots initiative, has been co-opted by the authorities.

At any rate, in the early hours of November 11, thousands of people begin gathering on the streets of Warsaw to take part in the march. Shortly before it begins, I reach the booth of the National Radical Camp (ONR), one of the movements I have been researching. Members are selling publications and clothes featuring patriotic rhetoric. The booth is conveniently situated next to the exit from the train station and the subway by which many participants are arriving and near the roundabout where the march will officially begin. It is also a meeting place for ONR supporters. For the purposes of my research, their activities and conversations are more relevant than the official observations, such as celebratory speeches on the stage. My interlocutors keep repeating that a march jointly organized with the authorities is hardly a success. They complain that nationalist movements had been allowed to function without interference under the centrist-liberal PO and that the "real problems" began only under the PiS government. Of course, "PO liberals" opposed their views, but the PiS has exerted much more control over their activism: the party does not want any competition on the right. Therefore, any attempts by PiS and its allies to cooperate with radical nationalists are seen with suspicion. Staszek, a thirty-year-old former head of ONR and my key interlocutor, passionately remarks: "I have always said it's better to die from a Marxist bullet than from a right-wing pat on the back!"[6] He adds: "Let's think about Codreanu: who killed him?" Corneliu Codreanu, the leader of the interwar Romanian legionary movement who serves as an inspiration for many contemporary far-right activists, fell victim to a conflict among right-wing factions.[7]

The only thing that satisfies my interlocutors is the size of the crowd: this is the best-attended march to date and, given its dual status as both nationalist rally and centenary celebration, perhaps the most diverse one. All around us, people are holding flags and banners: some sing patriotic songs, others opt for antisemitic rhetoric echoing interwar slurs or for much more "modern" anti-LGBTQ slogans. Among the crowd are representatives of several foreign groups: Hungarian, Slovakian, and Bulgarian right-wing activists as well as the Italians. People have been waiting for hours to start marching from the roundabout along one of Warsaw's main streets to the stadium, where a concert and speeches are planned. Staszek and I decide to cut through the side streets and join the march farther ahead. But the streets are so full of people—some praying, some shouting nationalist slogans, some trying to provoke the protesters who are observing the march—that we can hardly move. Unable to reach the stadium on foot, we eventually get there by subway. Outside the station, we see hundreds of people standing in a large, grassy area in front of the stage, which is located at the top of a slope, with a fence on the other side. We reach the stage just as one of the organizers, from another nationalist movement, is thanking the audience for their participation and talking angrily about the state trying to take over the march. A committed nationalist, he accuses the president, without apparent irony, of attempting to nationalize the march and promises that the event will remain a grassroots initiative.

Staszek and I attempt to climb onto the stage from the back, where the security guards are more likely to let us pass. But our way is blocked by the fence. Staszek apologizes to me and tells me to wait until he climbs the fence and returns with someone who can open the gate. When I tell him that women can also climb fences and begin doing so, he laughs and reminds me that sexism is a defining feature of the far right. As we jump down from the fence, a young man from the march guard approaches, aiming to stop us, but on seeing Staszek, he exclaims: "*Kierowniku* [My boss], you are here!" Like many others, this young man had found it hard to accept Staszek's resignation from the movement's leadership a few months earlier. Trying to talk over the loud music and the people around him, the young man tells Staszek how much he learned from him, about the studies he is pursuing thanks to Staszek's encouragement, about how much he owes him. Throughout his emotionally charged talk, he repeats that becoming an ONR member and meeting Staszek changed his life.

This brief interaction is the moment I remember most vividly from a march with no shortage of dramatic moments, including both verbal pyrotechnics and actual firecrackers. The warm exchange between Staszek and the young militant contrasted not only with mass-media depictions of this and similar events but also with what was happening onstage: the inflammatory rhetoric that appealed to the crowd with a black-and-white narrative about hostile media, bad politicians, and good nationalists who offer a solution. Backstage, out of the glare of the media and behind the activists' public posturing, I witnessed many such encounters that foregrounded the strong bonds, friendship, respect, and space for personal transformation that this nationalist movement represents to many young people who become a part of it, and which constitute a driving force behind their engagement.

My book tries to understand this force.

A few years ago, a chorus of academics and journalists began warning global audiences about the rise of the far right, variously depicted as the "nationalist international" or the new "league of nationalists."[8] Images of far-right demonstrations, white supremacist rallies, and angry citizens calling for making their countries "great again" filled the front pages of leading newspapers and the headlines of internet news platforms. Commentaries accompanying such pictures suggested that the aims of this contentious new politics were clear: they were destroying liberal democracies, fighting cosmopolitan and open-minded outlooks, seeking to go "back to the 1930s." Many did not hesitate to refer to fascism. Writing about new far-right and right-wing populist leaders and their followers was seen as a warning, a call for global society to learn from history and wake up before it was too late.[9]

It thus seemed that there was no need to investigate who and what the "new fascists" were and why they acted: plainly and simply, they were using methods from the past to bring earlier authoritarian movements into the present. In Europe, commentaries of this sort reached a peak after the 2015 refugee "crisis," the Brexit referendum in 2016, and a series of electoral wins for right-wing populist parties. Even those analyses that claimed to offer a more complex picture, striving to situate heightened nationalist sentiments and growing xenophobia within the context of global capitalist restructuring, offered little insight into the claims, goals, and motivations of the far right. These analyses depicted their subjects as passive, dispossessed victims of neoliberalism and global capitalism, or otherwise irrational actors whose politics were driven by fears and anxieties.[10] Finally, far-right actors of very different motivations and orientations were painted with the same broad brush, as if the subsequent electoral victories of Viktor Orbán, conversions of some Republican Party voters in the United States to Russian Orthodoxy, and the popularity of youth movements calling for a nationalist socialist revolution all stemmed from the same causes and implied the same kind of politics and ideology.[11] This tendency also made it difficult to see the individuals—with their desires, strivings, and emotions—behind the labels.

Similar reactions were heard in anthropological responses to these debates and to the alleged rise of the far right more broadly, which initially ranged from nonexistent to problematic. Shortly after Donald Trump's election in 2016, during an ad hoc organized session at the meeting of the American Anthropological Association, anthropologists lamented that there was no ethnography of the Tea Party they could assign to students.[12] Three years later, at the World Congress of Anthropology in 2019, in a prestigious plenary session devoted again to the rise of the far right, panelists argued that it was necessary to carry out more in-depth research with victims of far-right hatred (such as refugees) and expressed their disgust with the current state of politics. When asked about the small number of ethnographies of the far right, a leading American anthropologist cut the comment short, saying it is hard to study people we don't like.

My efforts to understand the contemporary far-right scene are situated within these broader debates, including those about viable research topics for anthropologists. I agree with the observations regarding the threat posed by far-right politics, its resemblance to interwar fascism, and the difficulties anthropologists may face in their attempts to study its proponents, but I attempt to tackle them in a different manner. My work takes the problem of the far right very seriously—I would not have undertaken this project otherwise—but I critically evaluate explanations of both the far right's rise and the return of fascism. I consider the historical context, but rather than treating the legacy of fascism as a given, I inquire about far-right militants' attitudes toward the past. Similarly, I strive to make sense of exchanges and mutual inspirations by demonstrating how far-right actions that transcend national borders both move beyond the national context and remain strongly embedded in it. Rather than assuming what the "nationalist international" means, however, in investigating the phenomenon that I refer to as *transnational nationalism* I focus on how the transnational and the national are mutually constituted and transformed.

Finally, my work takes seriously the challenge of studying people whom the anthropologist does not necessarily like. But instead of considering it a justification for inaction, I see it as an opportunity for rethinking the politics of anthropological methods and practice. Indeed, I reject the very formulation "people we don't like": not liking someone's ideas ought not to equate to disliking them as a person.[13] In the remainder of this chapter, I examine the novelty of the problem we are facing, provide historical contextualization, describe the participants in my study, and explain the approach I developed to study the far right. In addressing these issues, I simultaneously sketch the contours of this book.

The Liberal Question

At first blush, my story about the far-right gathering in Warsaw easily fits into the dominant narrative that I have just described. An angry "nationalist international" marched through Warsaw. Its representatives carried symbols and shouted slogans that evoked those of the 1930s and found delight in mocking their opponents (as embodied by the liberal press and liberal opposition), and the march itself had the blessing of right-wing populist politicians. This seemingly clear portrait, however, is a reductionist one. The far right is composed of many different, at times competing, constituencies whose aims do not necessarily align. In Poland, far-right movements such as ONR are not new, nor have they grown significantly in recent years. In fact, their popularity, which peaked during the period of centrist-liberal governance, has been decreasing since 2015.[14] In Italy, my second key field site, "(neo)fascist" demonstrations have been part of the political landscape for decades, and every surge in their presence provokes debates about what counts as fascism. The actors in question reject the label *fascist* not only because of the polemical nature of the term, but also because they consider it anachronistic.

My efforts to problematize the picture of the contemporary far right thus neither underestimate the problems identified nor question the new far right's outspoken racism, xenophobia, and anti-LGBTQ rhetoric. My work simply attempts to understand the phenomena often described as the sudden rise of the far right and the return of fascism. I situate these problems in the context of what I call "crisis talk," demonstrating how such discourses emphasize the disjuncture of the current moment with the previously "normal" sociopolitical order.[15] Let us briefly reflect on the assumptions of both the normal and the rupture/discontinuity.

First, public discussions about the new right-wing actors—a group I define very broadly for now—tend to focus on the idea of a lost normality.[16] The new right-wing politics is considered threatening because it contests international alliances, promises to bring factories and jobs back home, and toys with the idea of national autarky, thereby challenging the global economic order (*economic liberalism,* usually referred to as neoliberalism). Similarly, right-wing actors are seen as questioning the very bases of liberal democracy, such as the rule of law, shaking the assumption of *political liberalism* as the normal political model.[17] Such responses to antiliberal or illiberal challenges entails a tacit acceptance of a hegemonic liberalism, without an attempt to (at least) entertain different socioeconomic and sociopolitical scenarios or to confront liberalism's failures.[18] Although in numerous states the new right gained appeal and/or power because of citizens' rejection of liberal rule, the analyses that do not see a return to liberalism as an obvious solution remain marginal.[19] In other words, illiberal sentiments are de facto postliberal—they express a disappointment with the experience of liberalism.[20] This point has not been given sufficient attention. Instead, in public and mass media usage, *illiberalism* is treated as a deviation from the norms of society and the international community.[21]

While scholarly contributions have brought more nuance to these discussions, a more systematic critique, or rethinking, of the liberal consensus is still lacking.[22] Generally, intellectual critiques of economic liberalism—usually referred to as neoliberalism—have flourished in recent decades, especially within anthropology.[23] Many recent works explicitly address the rise of right-wing populism in the context of neoliberalization.[24] Little has been done, however, to *connect* the contestation of neoliberalism with a critique of liberalism conceived of as a political, ethical, and cultural project. As Jan Kubik has shown, instead of connecting them, recent analyses of the rise of illiberalism seem to ignore the distinction between three meanings of liberalism: political, economic, and cultural.[25] In agreeing with his analysis, I contend that while distinguishing them, we need to acknowledge that numerous "illiberal" or "antiliberal" actors conceive of liberalism as a holistic framework, and to scrutinize liberalism as understood by research participants.

To be clear, when I talk about rethinking liberalism or entertaining different sociopolitical scenarios, I do not mean discarding all of liberalism's achievements. Rather, I criticize its taken-for-grantedness, which leads to lack of a critical perspective. The kind of reflection that I call for—and attempt to engage in throughout the book—highlights the importance of the language of critique, which I link with the language of utopia.[26] In proposing such a take on critique—understood not as a rejection but as a way to think differently about the future—I follow Saba Mahmood's reflections on liberal secularism and Susan Harding's work on fundamentalism and, more recently, populism.[27]

Second, the reflection I call for emphasizes the need to pay attention to the illiberalism operating within liberalism—that is, the different forms of exclusion and inequality (re)produced by liberalism.

This leads me to a second point, the assertion of disruption or a sudden rise of right-wing views. Douglas Holmes's *Integral Europe*, in my view by far the best work illuminating the current moment, was published in 2000. While it was certainly prophetic, it pointed to developments that had been unfolding across Western Europe since the late 1980s.[28] In the same period, Eastern Europe likewise saw the rise of both far-right militancy and parties.[29] If those developments did not get wider attention, or were easily forgotten, it is because they challenged the welcome narrative of "the end of history," as articulated by Francis Fukuyama, which supposedly occurred with the end of the Cold War.[30] They also hindered the idea of the market integration (as embodied by the European Union's expansion). This does not imply that there is no difference between the late 1990s, when it was exceptional for European nations to have far-right parties in government, and the present, when right-wing populist governments have become common elements of the political landscape.[31] What is salient, and supported by the literature cited, is that the rise of the far right is not new or sudden. It has been occurring since the late 1980s, in response to a newly globalized regime that posed fundamental challenges in manifold spheres, from nation-state sovereignty through state-citizen relations to everyday sociability.[32] Furthermore, the crisis and transformation of the Left have been instrumental in the appearance of new far-right formations.[33] This view forces us to shift, or perhaps expand, the focus of our attention: rather than examining the far right's (own) strategizing and tactics, it is necessary to reflect on the circumstances that give rise to such strategies and tactics and in which they appear effective. In brief, the far right needs to be analyzed as an element of a broader process of sociopolitical transformation.

The developments I discuss here have not occurred at a consistent pace: indeed, my analysis sheds light on both common and idiosyncratic experiences in different European countries. At the same time, the attempt to look beyond the Cold War as the catalyst of sociopolitical developments—which in my work translates into a critique of a persistent exoticization of Eastern Europe by virtue of its perception as an incubator of populism—implies a rethinking of political-geographical taxonomies.[34] As Paula Chakravartty and Srirupa Roy point out, "The current scholarly interest in the topic of populism reflects the familiar Eurocentric practice of granting world-historical significance and generalizability to a phenomenon only when it occurs in Europe and North America—hence, the 'global age of populism' is pronounced to be upon us only after the election of Donald Trump to the U.S. presidency in November 2016."[35]

Radical nationalism is one among a broad variety of far-right responses to the global order. I understand it as a sociopolitical project linking nationalist claims with anticommunist and anticapitalist rhetoric, and rejecting liberalism tout court. In turn, I understand the globalized economic regime as a chain of "ethical, moral and social maneuvers."[36] Radical nationalism must be seen as a project that offers an alternative ethical framework and view of the social. In challenging the discourse on the rise of the far right as rupture and anomaly, I argue that current radical nationalist formations have been growing, with different dynamics, for decades—as fascism did over a century ago.[37] Like fascism, radical nationalism in Europe is rooted in European culture, and in response to the social, economic, and political agendas that developed therein.[38] And, like fascism, it constitutes a response to the double movement (understood as a call for social protections vis-à-vis market forces) rather than a double movement itself.[39]

This is why I speak here about the *question*—the liberal question. In *The Age of Questions*, Holly Case analyzes a series nineteenth-century "questions" (the Jewish question, the woman question, the Eastern question, and so on) and contrasts the posing of questions with the resolution of crises.[40] The notion of the *question* indicates ambiguity. On the one hand, it encompasses the very act of pondering, asking, and exploring—an aspect that has intrigued me in the course of my research and which is underlined by an increasing number of scholars of the far right who describe it as a "radical innovation."[41] On the other hand, as Case poignantly observes, inhabitants of nineteenth-century Europe who asked questions ("querists") were "allergic to the present," wanted change but were not necessarily progressive, and demanded definitive solutions.[42] In short, *question* indicates a tension between the past and the future, the answers that are known and desired and those that are still to be explored. This is radical nationalism, and radical nationalists, as I got to know them.

The Querists

Narratives highlighting a "crisis" or the "rise" of a sociopolitical phenomenon are related to the tendency to conflate disparate issues: neo-Nazism with right-wing populism, and political parties and social movements with loosely organized activism. That actors featured in such narratives may have different political goals and may often be opponents—like those involved in the controversy over the Polish independence march—may escape analytic attention. Such narratives also fail to account for differences in the temporal dynamics of social movements and political parties: movements may lose strength once a (seemingly) politically aligned party enters the parliament. In this book, I thus distinguish between far-right parties and far-right movements, while recognizing the importance of the interactions between them.

The key protagonists of the book are two far-right movements, in Poland and in Italy. The Italian association, Lealtà Azione (Loyalty Action, LA) has been active in Italy since 2010 and has been expanding across the country, though its stronghold is still the North. The majority of LA founders have a skinhead background, originating from the Hammerskin subculture.[43] While this background continues to matter—especially when it comes to defining the group's core membership or explaining the continuing importance of football fandom and popularity of particular musical genres—its visibility has been fading. Most of LA's founders long ago replaced heavy boots and military jackets with New Balance sneakers and polo shirts, and most new recruits are likely to learn about LA through its social campaigns rather than at the football stadium.

Hierarchical and clearly structured, LA is made up of sections, or branches, responsible for specific tasks: social assistance, care for the environment and animals, actions raising awareness about persecuted Christians, martial arts and sport, and historical politics. Each branch has a person in charge who reports to the LA board, composed mostly of founders of the movement. In recent years, LA has adopted a sort of franchise model, creating a network called FedeRazione (Federation), which today comprises over a dozen movements across Italy.[44] The movements retain their own names but accept LA's lead in choosing their forms of activism. In this book I sometimes talk about FedeRazione as a whole and sometimes about movements within the network, but LA, and in particular its Milan and Florence branches, are central. It is crucial to note that LA/FedeRazione began expanding at the time when youth unemployment in Italy peaked, economic crisis deeply affected an already weakened welfare state, migrants and refugees (often entering Europe through Italy) became problem number one in public discourse, and highly contested "technical governments" were unable to provide the solution to all these problems.[45]

The Polish association Obóz Narodowo-Radykalny (ONR) dates back to the interwar era. Established in 1934, it was quickly outlawed by the authoritarian government but continued its activities underground. Contemporary

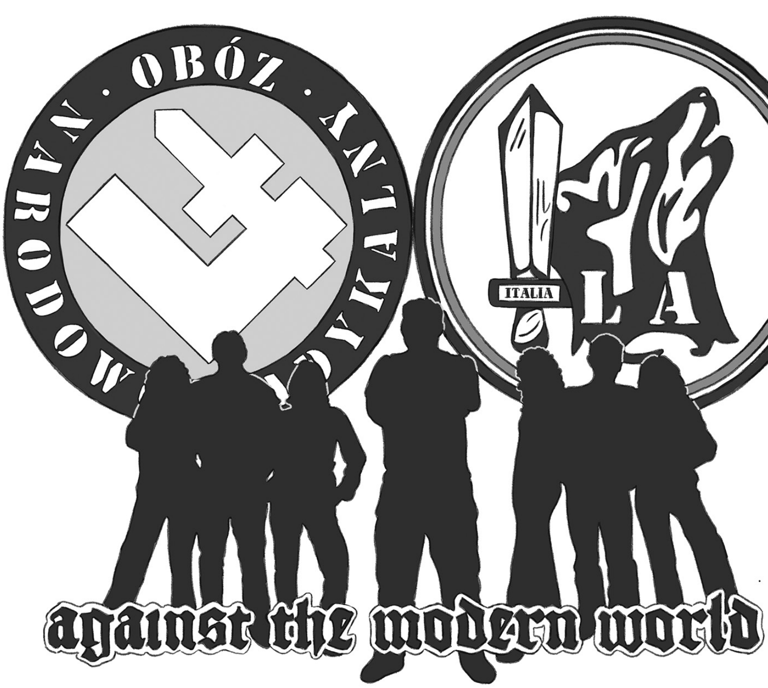

FIGURE 1. Leaflet depicting the cooperation between the Polish movement ONR and the Italian movement LA.

members are proud of that history, and eagerly—albeit selectively—draw on interwar nationalist thought that was strongly inspired by fascism. ONR was reestablished in the early 1990s, and it has been operating since then with variable success and energy. As with LA, its members are usually in their twenties and thirties and predominantly male. Leaders of regional units (brigades) report to the board, composed of three people and led by an overall leader (*kierownik główny*). The ONR is not as well organized as the LA, but its main fields of activism are similar: in recent years it has been developing a program of social assistance and has been active in the field of historical politics as well as promoting martial arts and sport.

Like LA, ONR has been undergoing what one member described to me as “de-skinization.” At an ONR convention, one is likely to meet a forester, a poet, a schoolteacher, and a mechanic sitting at the same table. Youth from all walks of life may find their way to the movement. Particularly during the period of centrist-liberal rule in Poland (2008–15), joining ONR was seen as an act of resistance and of disagreement with a "happily ever after" narrative of Poland as a member of the European Union.[46] Although Poland was not as severely affected by the 2008 economic crisis as Italy was, numerous young people joining nationalist movements challenged the country's "success story," pointing out that millions of Poles had emigrated in search of employment, and considering the government to be ignorant of people's everyday realities.[47]

Both movements are dominated by men, who make up about 70–80 percent of their members, yet they have been striving to appeal to women. I describe most of movements' members as representatives of the "youth." As this label is usually used to define the period of time between adolescence and the mid-twenties, it may seem inapplicable to many of my research participants, people in their thirties and forties. Most "older" activists, however, began their militancy as youths, in the period that is of importance in terms of developing individual and collective identities, developing and solidifying political attitudes, as well as experimenting with new ideas, styles, and communities of reference.[48] The inclusion of older members is important given their leading positions, their influence on and "formation" of younger members, as well as their role as gatekeepers.[49]

It is hard to estimate the membership of either LA or ONR. Not only do numbers fluctuate, but group members are reluctant to talk about them. When asked, activists reply: "We care about quality and not quantity: it is better to have a dozen devoted members than hundreds of half-committed ones." When pushed harder, they emphasize that each regional chapter has a small core of active members who are involved in the organization of events and day-to-day operations, in addition to a larger number of sympathizers and less engaged members who show up at anniversary celebrations and demonstrations. The emphasis placed on the core membership corresponds with the movements' self-representation as communities who grow together, learn together, and educate new generations. This emphasis notwithstanding, throughout the years members of both movements have been reported and/or sentenced for acts of violence. The question of violence is one I return to throughout the book, and my approach to far-right activists as querists is in no way meant to undermine its importance; quite the contrary, I strive to engage it by highlighting the troublesome relation between the "intellectual" turn of the far right and continuous importance of "brute force."

Furthermore, despite the groups' emphasis on "ethics" and "culture," and their declared contempt for (LA), if not outright rejection of (ONR), liberal-democratic systems, both movements have an impact on party politics. Their influence is far from a straightforward issue: it may mean electoral support in one moment and competition in another. Generally speaking, both LA and ONR are more likely to establish alliances in municipal and regional elections than to get involved in party politics at the national level, as this helps them to operate locally—for example, to obtain permission for an event or find a building to use as a headquarters. LA has supported a few Lega Salvini politicians, while ONR has had occasional rapport with PiS.

LA and ONR share important social values: an attachment to the Christian—specifically Catholic—tradition and a rejection of secularist ideologies;[50] an ethno-cultural conceptualization of national communities, including a strong emphasis on roots, territory, and cultural and natural heritage; and a discourse emphasizing the "natural" family and, implicitly, traditional gender roles (and hierarchies). These aspects distinguish them from those representatives of the New Right who embrace the defense of secularism and LGBTQ movements.[51] Other common features include an anticommunist, anticapitalist, and antiliberal rhetoric; anti-Americanism and antisemitism, which at times are linked with anti-Israeli positions and at times entail a reproduction of classical antisemitic tropes;[52] and last, a regard for fascism as a source of inspiration. Despite their different national histories and different experiences of and with fascism, both movements draw heavily on interwar fascism and, to a lesser extent, on neofascist thinkers from different countries. In both movements, a key point of reference is the Romanian Legionary movement and its leader, Codreanu.[53]

Although LA and ONR are at the center of my analysis, I have also interacted with several other groups.[54] I talk about some of them elsewhere.[55] In this book, I occasionally expand my discussion to include the Hungarian Sixty-Four Counties Youth Movement (Hatvannégy Vármegye Ifjúsági Mozgalom, or HVIM). Similar to LA and ONR in its ideological underpinnings, it differs in that it is not only nationalist but also revisionist: its aim is to restore the so-called Greater Hungary and unite all ethnic Hungarians. The cornerstone of HVIM's activism is the memory of the Treaty of Trianon, the treaty in 1920 concluding the First World War between Hungary and the Allied powers, as a result of which Hungary lost 70 percent of its territory, including regions inhabited by ethnic Hungarians.[56] Consequently, HVIM is also active in Slovakia and Romania and invests a lot of energy in educational campaigns highlighting ethnic Hungarian and historical politics. Although I had not intended to study this movement, I found that I could not ignore it because Polish and Italian militants persistently emphasized its importance

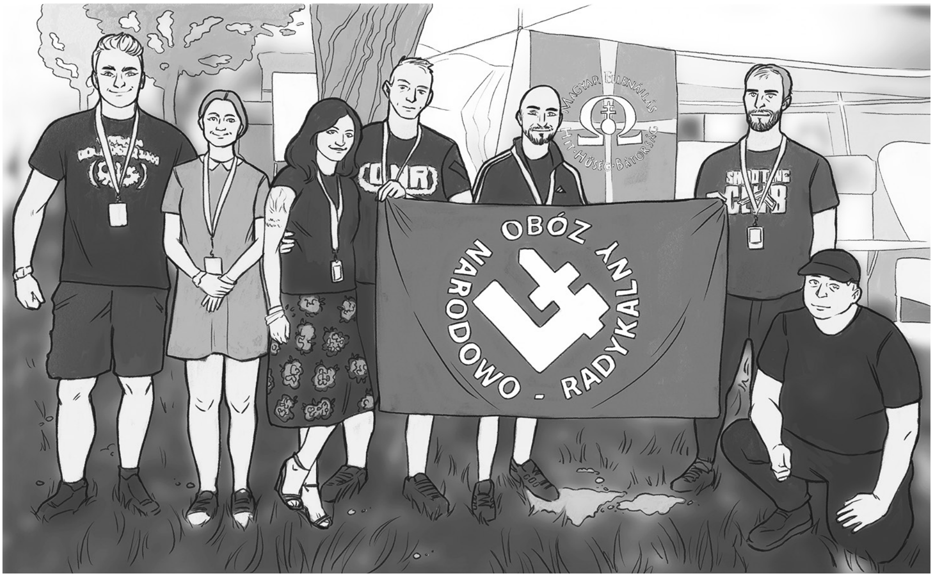

FIGURE 2. Visit by ONR members to the music festival organized by the Hungarian movement HVIM.

for understanding the contemporary far-right scene. Because of time limits and linguistic obstacles, however, my engagement with HVIM was more limited than with the movements in Italy and Poland, and I include only insights from conversations with individual members.[57]

The political agendas of LA, ONR, and HVIM make them apt candidates for a study of radical nationalism. However, there were additional reasons why I decided to conduct my research with these specific groups. I decided to focus on social movements operating transnationally, rather than on political parties or political ideologues, and to study them ethnographically for three reasons.[58] First, I was intrigued by the querist nature of their project—the emphasis they put on discussing, learning, and exploring. Deeply grounded in a European radical nationalist tradition, more often than not bearing a fascist stamp, and quoting from memory beloved mottoes and words from figures they admire, the activists I met do not necessarily have answers to the issues they aim to tackle. (And, as I demonstrate in the conclusion to the book, this querist mindset suggests that radical nationalism may not offer them answers either.) As I show throughout the book, my emphasis on the querist character of their project is neither to undermine a deeply exclusionary character of their agenda nor the fact there exists a set of assumptions they seem not to question.[59] Second, I was fascinated by the view of national community that the movements put forward because it constitutes other powerful experiences of community: camaraderie, friendship, growing together, ethical becoming. The fraternal and friendship bonds that the movements persistently underline at once shape everyday lives and move beyond the here and now. Within the movements, an often lofty rhetoric about nation or community coexists with humor and irony.[60] And third, I was intrigued by activists' boldness: the constantly articulated wish to move forward while "keeping an eye on the idea" (as my Hungarian interlocutor Sandor put it), and the recovery of the language of utopia when thinking politically and socially.

An examination of these three aspects—the querist character, the desire for community, and the boldness of the political project—is, in my view, key to understanding the force that attracts many young people to the radical nationalist project. At the same time, it may give us insights into contemporary youth more broadly.[61] In the following section, I show how my own search for explanations for the appeal of radical nationalism relates to the activists' idea of how to solve the liberal question.

Why Fascism?

During a conversation with an Italian activist in which we discussed what made their project special, my interlocutor affirmed: "It is simple. We want people to fall in love with our view of the world. We want to reenchant the world."

Reenchantment—which is necessarily related to the experience of disenchantment and the experience of liberal modernity—opens up numerous interpretative possibilities. It encourages us to discuss the radical nationalist project against the background of a long tradition of antimodernist and anti-Enlightenment critique; to consider it as a kind of Occidentalist narrative; and finally—and perhaps unsurprisingly—to ask whether the process of disenchantment and reenchantment is what radical nationalist activists find most inspiring about the fascist project.[62]

The movements I have been researching are often dubbed fascist or neofascist. These terms are used in political speech meant to cast them as intransigent opponents as well as in scholarly work that tries to make sense of ongoing developments. I acknowledge the importance of the historical dimension both as a source of comparisons for scholars and also, perhaps more critically, as a source on which far-right activists *flexibly* draw in their interpretations of history, as well as in their activism, to bring about desired futures. While their use of "fascist" grammar and vocabulary is obvious, the ways they are deployed are less so. Rather than *assuming* activists' relationship to the past, I ask: What do they do with the past, broadly conceived, to make it speak to the future?[63]

This work neither asks nor seeks to answer whether what we observe today "counts as" or "is" fascism; scholars of fascism have already contributed extensively to these debates.[64] Rather, I turn to historians such as George Mosse, Martin Kitchen, and Eugen Weber, who discussed the conditions that make fascism attractive, but without looking for its facsimile.[65] What I hope to contribute to the scholarship of fascism is of a different nature. In making a generation of young European activists the key protagonists of this book, I ask: How do these young European activists conceptualize the world they live in? What are the terms they deploy, and how do they use them to transform their world? Only after exploring these questions do I ask why fascism provides a useful language for them and how it helps them to understand what's going on in their world. In other words, rather than presuming that what they do means reanimating fascism, I instead ask: Why is fascism such an *animating force*?

I approach this question in a threefold manner. First, I argue that if the activists' references to fascism are expressions of dissatisfaction about contemporary circumstances, we must do a better job of understanding what appeal fascism itself holds for them, moving beyond characterizing it as a "politics of us and them" or a "cult of victimhood."[66] Such phenomena also flourish in nonfascist forms, and equating them with fascism is a dangerous reductionism. What far-right activists find appealing about fascism is its revolutionary nature, nationalist mysticism, and holistic conception ("fascism created a political environment that attempted to encompass the entire man and woman").[67] As I demonstrate in chapter 3, fascism has meant different things at different stages of its development and in different political contexts. Thus it must be thought of as a broad repertoire of ideas and practices from which contemporary militants draw—and draw rather freely.

Second, asking about the force of fascism means inquiring into the *communicative force* of the term, as when opponents deploy it as a term of condemnation. Why does calling a politician, a movement, or a march "fascist" seem an absolute condemnation? By extension, is an anti-Muslim policy or a racist epithet more offensive if attributed to a fascist rather than "merely" to a member of radical right-wing group? The answer to these questions may seem obvious: the label *fascism* simply epitomizes evil in the modern world. As Martin Kitchen writes: "A thing does not have to be fascist to be bad, but if fascism is made synonymous with badness it must be bad by very definition."[68] The same observation applies to symbols and gestures like the "Roman" salute Italian activists continue to perform (see chapter 6). Some commentaries offer these as evidence of the return of fascist aesthetics. It would be hard for anthropological work to ignore questions of symbols and rituals, and I discuss their importance for the movements throughout the book, finding inspiration in a rich body of literature on the subject.[69] Yet the search for facsimiles of historical fascism, ideological or aesthetic, often leads analysts to underestimate the potency of the novel forms of politics and activism unfolding before our eyes. Rather than focusing on the far right as an imitation of the past, it is important to examine it as a radical innovation in the present.[70]

Third, I ask about fascism's *synthesizing force*. Rather than considering fascism as the one and only language of the far right, I show how it connects with other vocabularies. George Mosse saw fascism as a product of popular culture, claiming that "fascism always appropriated already existing, familiar, and popular ideas while manipulating them and integrating them into its own worldview."[71] He described fascism as a scavenger, co-opting what had appealed to people earlier (e.g., romanticism, socialism), and argued that too little attention was paid to this co-optation. In this monograph, I try to respond to this call, presenting far-right activists as both *consumers* and *coproducers* of historical knowledge about fascism.[72] Showing how fascist ideas interact with the books far-right activists love, the music they perform and enjoy, the TV shows they devour, and the podcasts they subscribe to strengthens my attempt to explore the fascism*s* of *our time*.[73] I am writing about people here and now, and I fully engage with their language and categories.

In discussing fascism as a force and reflecting on contemporary expressions of fascism, I highlight three key features of fascism that I consider vital for understanding its current manifestations and why it seems to enchant youth. Drawing on Mosse's scholarship, I approach fascism as an anthropological project and a cultural revolution: "Fascism considered as a cultural movement means seeing fascism as it saw itself and as its followers saw it, to attempt to understand the movement in its own terms. Only then, when we have grasped fascism from the inside out, can we truly judge its appeal and its power." In short, the aim is to penetrate fascist self-understanding and to engage with fascists' broad understanding of culture ("dealing with life seen as a whole")—which comes very close to anthropological conceptions of culture.[74] I engage with these self-understandings most explicitly in part 1 of this book. In part 2, drawing on Ze'ev Sternhell, I consider fascism's "neither-nor-ism," its operating between left and right. In part 3 I emphasize fascism's anti-individualist and communitarian orientation, foregrounded by numerous scholars.[75] My analysis confirms the importance of communitarian discourses and practices for today's far-right activism.

While I conceive of fascism as a form of revolutionary radical nationalism, an attempt at bringing about a cultural revolution, with a strong anticapitalist and anti-Marxist, antiliberal, anti-individualistic, and cultural orientation, I restrain from adopting a specific definition of fascism or proposing a new definition for phenomena unfolding today. The Italian historian Angelo Tasca said that defining fascism means writing its history.[76] My goal is to understand its present.

An Imperfect Fieldwork

In the preface I described the very beginning of my fieldwork with the far right, marked by a Polish-Italian quarrel I inadvertently provoked but which turned out to provide an entry point for my research. In the following months, I managed to establish contacts with activists in Italy and Poland, and later on in Hungary. Engaging in first conversations was not an easy task; many activists doubted my intentions, suspecting that I was a journalist aiming to discredit them. I had to negotiate my access to activists and their groups with each and every visit. "It is a bit like stepping on the ice," I wrote in my field notes. "One wrong comment, one sentence too much, and they might reconsider whether they want to talk to me."

Nonetheless, between the summer of 2016 and the spring of 2022, I regularly traveled from my home in Austria to Italy and Poland, and occasionally to Hungary and to the region of Slovakia inhabited by ethnic Hungarians. My periods of fieldwork varied in length and intensity. I had to fit fieldwork into my teaching schedule and family obligations, thinking with nostalgia about the privilege of my doctoral fieldwork, when I could focus exclusively on my research (participants). Two maternity leaves and the COVID-19 pandemic meant further interruptions. Consequently, my research trips ranged from weekend visits to weeklong stays. In addition to "hanging out" with my research participants, as anthropologists tend to do, I strove to attend key events in their calendars, such as monthly food distributions, summer camps, annual gatherings, and commemorative events (such as the Ramelli march and the Polish March of Independence), which sometimes entailed international networking. To complement knowledge gained from direct encounters, I studied any materials the movements provided me with (such as militants' guides and materials used to train new activists), I followed them on social media, and, especially during the pandemic, I communicated with them online.[77] Both formal encounters and informal conversations were crucial in allowing me to draw a picture of contemporary far-right activism.

Although I attended many events and partook in numerous discussions, I also missed many. International gatherings such as the one described in the introduction were rare during my fieldwork, and I ended up tracing transnational connections by visiting various local sites. A study of the transnational means first and foremost a study of the local, or rather of various local sites, as the scholars pursuing "multi-sited ethnography" have long demonstrated.[78] Despite the expectations created by my first ethnographic trip to an international far-right festival, I had limited opportunities to observe international networking in person. Rather, I attended to various localized ways of re- and coproducing fascist history, responding to global upheavals, and crafting new agendas. Analysis of these projects demonstrates that the meaning of "local" is relative.[79] The multiplicity of these sites proves truer than ever George Marcus's contention that multi-sited ethnography is to be employed whenever researching a single site cannot provide us with answers we are searching for.

Moreover, my inability to be "there . . . and there . . . and there" reflects the limits of multi-sited ethnography;[80] on numerous occasions I had to choose between two events in different cities or countries taking place at the same time. While I am well aware that as ethnographers we always miss "something," even if parked in one village for months, acknowledging incompleteness is an important element of our fieldwork. Paraphrasing Kirin Narayan's encouragement to forgive ourselves for the imperfections of our ethnographic writing, it could be said that an acknowledgment of the imperfect and incomplete nature of our research prevents us from lapsing into arrogance.[81]

Along with the inability to be in multiple places at once, one of the biggest challenges of my transnational ethnography was operating within and between different languages, and different idioms and dialects within one language. I sometimes took field notes in a mixture of Italian and Polish but then had to translate them into English, inevitably losing some richness and nuance in translation. Often I was frustrated by my inability to render the context and cultural specificity of a term or an idiomatic expression used by my research participants. To mitigate this problem, throughout the book I often include both the original phrasing and my translation. Attempts to translate wordplay can rarely convey the fun, ironic, provocative character of the original.

Furthermore, research on youth requires an engagement with slang and neologisms, which tend to have a bantering character. This is even truer for the subcultural milieus that far-right actors represent. Being unable to translate many of their idiomatic expressions into English was particularly troubling to me. I felt it impoverished my research participants' portraits, making it impossible to fully convey either their smartness and irony or the emotions driving their activism. And finally, different languages encompass different dialects—particularly in Italy. Attention to dialect requires not only identifying and understanding linguistic differences but also observing when and how dialect is used. When speakers use dialect as a form of code switching, it is important to note the contexts in which they reach for dialectical expressions and how they position dialects in relation to the official national language (a question important for any study of nationalism).[82] A dialect can also be understood as a working-class accent and vocabulary in contrast to the standard one, or the idioms of high culture in contrast to those of the football stadium. My research participants' vocabulary and ways of talking—in short, the entire politics of language—further complicate the picture of far-right activism I am drawing in this book.

Fieldwork skills are a toolkit that we must continuously learn to use, update, and transform in response to circumstances. It took me a while to accept the challenging dynamics and somewhat serendipitous nature of fieldwork with far-right activists. I sometimes had to wait until the very last moment for the location of an event to be revealed or to learn whether I would be granted permission to attend a meeting. I traveled hundreds of kilometers only to hear that a concert had been canceled or that my research participants had to cancel a meeting to deal with some unexpected obligations. Nonetheless, in all these years there was not one trip, event, or meeting that did not deepen my understanding or make me feel grateful for the opportunity to conduct this research, despite all its ups and downs and ambiguities. I say this firmly *despite* the numerous occasions on which I felt I wouldn't find the emotional strength to engage with views and situations I found hard to bear, and I say it *because* of the feeling of "being perpetually pulled down beyond the limits of one's own taken-for-granted-world" that doing and writing this ethnography has created.[83]

My research participants may have had similar feelings: it took them time to understand my fieldwork dynamics and the nature of my work. Many of the activists expressed surprise about my research methods, which did not seem "scientific"; in this respect they resemble the protagonists of numerous other ethnographic studies who tend to be surprised by the key ethnographic method of "hanging out."[84] Some were amazed by my frequent visits, while others began treating my presence as normal and even messaged me to ask if we would see each other. Nonetheless, they never forgot that I was a researcher and an outsider, guarding certain areas (literally and metaphorically), being careful about what they were sharing with me, or emphasizing that a comment they made was not meant for my book. Yet the fact our conversations went well beyond the subjects of activism and ideological inspirations and touched on random issues attests to some sort of rapport. In several cases my relations with research participants no doubt came close to friendship, manifested in both their care for my well-being (and my family's) and the ironic and humorous way in which they sometimes addressed me, with remarks like "This is something your lefty soul will be happy to hear."[85]

The last quote invites a commentary on the *politics* of my ethnographic practice. Participants saw me not only as a researcher but as a Polish researcher and a female researcher. I discuss my positionality in the chapter devoted to gender (chapter 6). And they acknowledged my political outlook. I never hid my political views, which could indeed be read as "lefty." I also never pretended I wanted to join them. Banally, and persistently, I stressed my wish to *understand*. This was my only option from the ethical point of view, and it also turned out to be the best option. My wish to understand—manifested, according to my research participants, in the questions I asked, my willingness to travel with a baby to take part in one debate, and the fact that I did not disguise my purpose or intentions—is what made this fieldwork possible. I want to stress here, however, that while I have called my approach "ethnographic" as opposed to the "militant" one (see preface), I treat understanding as a precondition for action aimed at deconstructing and dismantling systems of inequality and discrimination. As feminist scholar bell hooks emphasized, in refusing to engage with the views of people we disagree with, we risk reproducing the attitudes of those we criticize: "Part of the construction of dominator privilege is that they don't have to think about what are those other people thinking, hoping, feeling, dreaming."[86]

In stating all this, I by no means want to draw a self-congratulatory picture of a perfect ethnographer. Foregrounding my desire to understand was an approach I had to learn. At the outset, I sought to convey my respect for my interlocutors by stating clearly that I disagreed with them on numerous points, to the extent that I perhaps exaggerated my disagreement. With time, however, I came to realize that respect entailed treating them as I would any other informants. In short, I began to recognize the danger of exoticizing my research participants through these reminders of how different they were from other research subjects—and from me.

Exoticism à Rebours

My commitment to take my research participants seriously and my conviction that ethnography is the best approach for capturing their processes of meaning-making and the formation of moral-political subjectivities do not negate the question of the limits of ethnographic understanding and our capacity not to judge. The assumption that it is difficult to study people whom one "doesn't like" or "disagrees with" shaped my fieldwork in a profound way and prompted me to engage with dominant rules of anthropological practice, written and unwritten.

The ethnography of far-right activism and grassroots politics evinces several distinctive problems, the first of which is the belief that such research is lacking. This argument is clearly informed by disciplinary boundedness and makes evident the Western-centric perspective. While research on the subject has only recently begun to appear in anthropology, there is a rich body of ethnographic work from qualitative sociologists going back to the 1980s.[87] Furthermore, ethnographic works on grassroots far-right activism beyond the Western world are rarely acknowledged and used for comparative purposes.[88] This scholarship not only belies the claim that ethnographic research on the far right is rare (cf. Bangstadt 2017), but it also demonstrates that such research can be done without compromising one's convictions, falling into the empathy-sympathy trap, or being manipulated by far-right informants.[89]

These examples of existing research in different disciplines suggest that anthropology has a particular problem with the study of the far right. The presumed and real reasons behind this fact—regarding anthropologists' tendency to "sympathize" with the oppressed and marginalized, and the obligation to empathize and "give something back" to the community one studies—highlight profound problems that continue to mark anthropology in the twenty-first century. The first is the lack of reflection on what constitutes the "margins." Thomas Hylland Eriksen observes that cultural relativism (conceived as entailing moral relativism) is no longer an acceptable approach in a world that is so strongly interconnected, as it is "morally difficult to place 'the others' on a different moral scale than oneself."[90] In illustrating his claim, he states: "Cultural relativism can no longer be an excuse for not engaging existentially with the victims of patriarchal violence in India, human right lawyers in African prisons, minorities demanding not just cultural survival but fair representation in their governments." His examples of "people on the margins" are thus those with whom anthropologists (and other scholars) might easily sympathize. He leaves aside the question of how to study those on different locations along the political spectrum, who perhaps also occupy "the margins."[91]

In short, if the first step is to question the application of different moral scales, then the second should be to reflect on why the "margins" tend to be occupied mainly by those perceived as oppressed and politically sympathetic.[92] Although some might object to characterizing the far right as marginalized (and support their claims with recent opinion polls and electoral results), much public discourse fails to grasp the motivations of far-right supporters.[93] There is a need to grant, or restore, agency to far-right militants and their supporters—that is, to take into account that their views on homosexuality, religion, or racism are their ways of engaging with and changing the world. While anthropologists have long argued against notions of false consciousness and mystification, highlighting the multidimensionality of agency and resistance, it simultaneously seems difficult for many anthropologists to accept the fact that agency and resistance are not always of the sort that they themselves would like to see and support. This is precisely what an anthropology of fascism needs to contribute.

The problems of margins and cultural relativism relate to an often-unrecognized partiality regarding far-right activists as potential anthropological subjects. With respect to scholarship on violent nationalism or fundamentalist religious ideologies, it seems that it is possible to do research without sympathizing as long as research participants are, literally and metaphorically, distant. In other words, an anthropology of the far right is problematic mostly as a subtype of "anthropology at home" (mirroring many debates in the anthropology of Christianity).[94] If a violent nationalist inhabits an exotic island, we can explain her activities in terms of a "different cosmology"; yet we are unable to grant the same agency to a German or a Canadian radical nationalist.

As ethnographic subjects, far-right activists are at once too distant and too close—perhaps because, too often, they are estranged family members and unfollowed Facebook friends. I call this phenomenon *exoticism à rebours*—reverse exoticism. This sort of exoticism, like any other, involves fantasy—a fantasy of how different its subjects are from "us." In this book I am interested in questions of how ideas and values deemed "far-right" or "fascist" are embedded in *our* everyday practices, values, and political institutions. Far-right mainstreaming is a two-way process. Challenging the "us versus them" distinction (which problematically mirrors far-right discourses), and moving beyond the tendency to agree or disagree with, and to "like" or "dislike," particular research questions and subjects, may offer a critical perspective on anthropological (and more broadly social scientific) research practice.

Moving beyond this tendency to exoticize can also help us to rethink the problem of researcher complicity, understood as the often troubling "commonalities of reference, analytic imaginary, and curiosity that fieldworker and subject so productively share—each for different purposes," and recognize conceptual and intellectual, rather than moral, affinity and complicity.[95] A recognition of affinities between anthropologists pursuing research on the far right and their research participants has been a leitmotif in recent research on the subject.[96]

The methodological agenda I have just outlined is strongly intertwined with the theoretical intervention I make in this book. The question of moral scales and relativism, conceived of as methodological tools, is linked with the recent theoretical debates in the vibrantly developing anthropology of morality and ethics. Put succinctly, I explore the key facets of "fascist" or "radical nationalist" morality. In doing so, I heed Webb Keane's admonition that "an anthropology that confines its efforts only to understanding those of whom the anthropologist approves, and ignores what Harding called 'the repugnant other,' is hardly worthy of the name. It will certainly leave out of its purview a large part of the range of actually existing human realities."[97] Again, such a limited view also has to do with the problem of proximity: moral justifications of witchcraft-related violence continue to be more likely in anthropological investigations than justifications of the opinions and actions of a Dutch neo-Nazi.

Three inspirations are central here. The first is Didier Fassin's call for a "critical anthropology of morals," which stresses the need for a more nuanced understanding of the historical formation and political background of moral issues.[98] I contribute to this discussion by showing how activists' moral discourses and practices link with the ideas of an "anthropological" and societal revolution grounded in the ideology of fascism. The second inspiration is the idea of moral exemplars.[99] I engage with the far-right milieus' ideals for members of a movement and for the national (or even transnational) collective, and with the ways they use figures from the past to craft moral exemplars. The third is the question of the emergence of moral issues in the public sphere and, more broadly, the relation between the moral and the political. I theorize everyday activism not just as a form of political engagement but also as a moral practice, and I discuss different kinds of resentments as forms of moral-political subjectivities.[100] In addressing all these questions, I reflect on individual contexts—moral norms and moral exemplars—in relation to a supranational set of moral norms that activists appear to subscribe to.

A Travel Guide and a Dictionary

In striving to understand contemporary far-right movements, I invite readers on a journey to numerous places: through small villages and grim postindustrial neighborhoods to increasingly cosmopolitan city centers. We will visit movements' headquarters, activists' homes, pubs, museums, and historical monuments. We will travel to music festivals, summer camps, and war commemorations. All these different settings will allow us to see the heterogeneity of the ideas and deeds that inform radical-nationalist projects and how this heterogeneity is made into a coherent, all-encompassing vision with which militants wish to "reenchant" the world.

I describe the forms of activism I observed using—depending on the context—three different terms. The most general term is *far right*. Following Daphne Halikiopoulou and Andrea Pirro, I consider this to be the best available umbrella term for identifying movements and parties that justify a broad range of policy positions for socioeconomic issues on the basis of nationalism and national belonging.[101] Speaking of the far right not only enables us to include a plethora of radical right and extreme right-wing phenomena but also points to the increasingly blurred boundaries between them.[102] Second, I use the term *radical nationalist* to refer to far-right variants that link the nationalist agenda with an anticommunist, antiliberal, and anticapitalist rhetoric, thereby proposing a sort of "third way" socioeconomic order. Third, in specific contexts, I employ the term *fascist*, which I understand as a form of revolutionary radical nationalism ("Nationalism is a bedrock of fascism").[103] While I identify fascist symbols, fascist ideas, fascist predecessors, and fascist moral exemplars adopted by contemporary movements, I do not define these movements themselves as fascist; nor do I define people inspired by fascism as fascists.[104]

In choosing my words in this way, I acknowledge my research participants' emic terms. The activists I got to know are aware of the inadequacy of the various labels applied to them and their movements. Individual actors prefer to define themselves through membership in specific communities, for example, as "militants of LA/ONR," reflecting the importance of group identities and group formation.[105] They reject the term *fascist*, as they see fascism as having been a sociopolitical response to particular historical circumstances: while they consider it inspiring, they regard it as inapplicable to today's context.[106] They also emphasize that the label *far right* (*estrema destra* in Italian, *skrajna prawica* in Polish) does not adequately capture their agenda. Elaborating on this point, they stress that the categories of "left" and "right" have become meaningless and empty; that their movements draw heavily on some versions of left-wing, socialist traditions; and that they see themselves as a revolutionary force and as proponents of novel ways of thinking and doing politics, which the label *far right* does not reflect. They tend to distance themselves from this sort of terminology through statements such as the following: "In our environment, a so-called far-right one," or "Our ideas, let's call them 'far right.'" Yet while they draw on left-wing ideas, they reject the idea of equality, which has traditionally constituted the key distinction between left and right. Consequently, my use of the terms *far right* and *radical nationalist* is a compromise that attempts to mediate the emic and etic vocabularies.

The relation between my research participants' own terms, my engagement with these terms, and my fellow scholars' commentaries and broader scholarship animates this project. While tensions exist between the multiple levels of scholarly "translation" (field, analysis, reception, scholarship) in any ethnographic research, they are likely more pronounced in the case of "contentious subjects," such as the subjects of this book.

We will try to make sense of these "contentious subjects" over the coming chapters. The rest of the book is divided into three parts. Part 1 examines radical nationalist moral landscapes. Chapter 1 briefly discusses my key theoretical inspirations, engaging with recent scholarship within the anthropology of morality and reflecting on the relationship between morality and politics. This chapter also introduces the leaders of three movements. I analyze their trajectories and those of their movements through the prism of a nationalist morality that all of them adhere to, although they do not necessarily all understand it in a similar way. I continue this discussion in chapter 2, analyzing the process whereby fascist and radical nationalist ideologues, Second World War soldiers, and anticommunist partisans are crafted as moral exemplars. In activists' interpretations of history, *acting for the nation* emerges not only as a defining feature of a militant but as a matter of personal, moral coherence. Overall, part 1 emphasizes the tension between collective, widely shared understandings and a highly personal approach to fascist heritage, historical exemplars, and the very question of what "living right" means.

Part 2 sheds light on the radical nationalist political project in relation to left- and right-wing political agendas. Chapter 3 engages with the activists' views on the economy, stressing their opposition to the neoliberal order and their attempts to present their movements as preoccupied with the plight of "average men" while maintaining a highly elitist and anti-egalitarian agenda. It also discusses their relationship with populist radical right-wing parties. Chapter 4 continues the discussion on left and right, this time examining identity politics and culture as the central terrain of political battles. Discussing activists' approach to "diversity" or "identity" demonstrates their willingness to use these notions to their own advantage and to set the tone of debates. It also demonstrates their familiarity with anthropological toolkit. Part 2 thus highlights the centrality of antiliberalism, holistically understood, to these movements.

Reflections of (anti)liberalism are further developed in part 3 through the discussion of nationalist communitarianism. Chapter 5 looks at activists' trajectories and community-building practices through the lens of gender. In discussing the interplay of normative ideas of femininity and masculinity in shaping the movements, it demonstrates that while the ideas of order, discipline, and hierarchy are intrinsic to the movements' vision of community, they nonetheless leave space for empowerment and negotiation of gender roles. In the final chapter I further develop all these issues, reflecting on the different understandings of "community," engaging with the concept of ethical community, and, finally, linking the ideas of community, ethics, and nation.

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